

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:PINT MP

SUBJECT:RAMGOOLAM-DUVAL EXCHANGE OVER STATUS OF RODRIGUES  
ISLAND

1. SEPTEMBER 7 SESSION OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PROMISED TO BE DULL AFFAIR WITH ONLY FOUR ROUTINE BILLS UP FOR CONSIDERATION. HOWEVER, NINETY MINUTE MEETING ERUPTED WITH CONTROVERSY OVER A NUMBER OF UNANTICIPATED SUBJECTS. THESE INCLUDED CHARGES OF CONTEMPT OF THE ASSEMBLY AGAINST TWO NEWSPAPERS FOR PRINTING AN OPPOSITION POLITICIAN'S ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE SPEAKER OF UNCONSTITUTIONAL BEHAVIOR; SUBMISSION OF A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME; PUBLICATION OF THE PROSSER REPORT ON REHABILITATING THE DIEGO GARCIA ISLANDERS; A WARNING BY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION GAETAN DUVAL THAT THE DEVELOPMENT WORKERS WILL STRIKE IF THEIR DEMANDS ARE NOT MET; CHARGES OF FAVORITISM IN THE APPOINTMENT OF JUDGES BY A MEMBER OF THE RULING COALITION; OTHER CHARGES OF A MAJOR CUSTOMS FRAUD SCANDAL BY OPPOSITION PARTY LEADER BISSOONDOYAL; AND A DEMAND BY DUVAL FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED CHEATING ON POLICE EXAMS. SOME OF THESE ARE PROBABLY ONLY THE RESULT OF A HEATING-UP OF THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CLIMATE IN ANTICIPATION OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, WHICH WAS DEFINITELY THE UNDER-

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LYING CAUSE OF THE MOST HEATED EXCHANGE OF THE DAY,

BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM AND DUVAL OVER SOME OF THE LATTER'S RECENT CAMPAIGN STATEMENTS MADE DURING A VISIT TO RODRIGUES ISLAND.

2. RAMGOOLAM, WHO RARELY TROUBLES TO ANSWER THE OPPOSITION IN PARLIAMENT, TOOK ADVANTAGE OF ANOTHER MEMBER'S REFERENCE TO DUVAL'S REMARKS TO LECTURE DUVAL IN VERY STRONG LANGUAGE. DUVAL HAD ALLEGEDLY SAID TO HIS FOLLOWERS IN RODRIGUES LAST WEEK THAT IF THEY DIDN'T LIKE THE GOVERNMENT PRODUCED BY THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS THEY ALWAYS HAD THE OPTION OF DECLARING THEIR AUTONOMY OR OF ASSOCIATING THEMSELVES WITH FRANCE. RAMGOOLAM STATED THAT HE HAD READ PRESS REPORTS OF THIS SPEECH WITH "REPROBATION" AND HE WISHED TO SAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT TOLERATE THE DISMEMBERMENT OR ATTEMPTED DISMEMBERMENT OF THE STATE OF MAURITIUS. THERE COULD BE NO QUESTION OF THE SECESSION OF RODRIGUES IN FAVOR OF ASSOCIATION WITH FRANCE OR ANY OTHER POWER. HE HOPED THE GOF WOULD DISSOCIATE ITSELF FROM ANY SUCH PROPOSAL. RAM ACCUSED DUVAL OF MISLEADING THE RODRIGUANS AND OF ACTING IN A "HIGHLY IRRESPONSIBLE AND UNPATRIOTIC MANNER". FINALLY HE CHARACTERIZED DUVAL'S PROPOSAL AS A "MONSTROUS TREASON."

3. REPLYING "ON A POINT OF PERSONAL EXPLANATION," DUVAL DENIED THAT HE HAD AT ANY TIME "OFFERED" TO THE PEOPLE OF RODRIGUES ASSOCIATION WITH FRANCE OR ANY OTHER COUNTRY. HE SAID HE HAD NEVER ADVOCATED SUCH A COURSE. HE CLAIMED THAT HE HAD ONLY "REFERRED TO THE DIFFERENT ALTERNATIVES WHICH MIGHT APPEAL TO THEM IF THE GOVERNMENT WAS GOING TO BECOME LEFTIST OR COMMUNIST IN MAURITIUS OR CONTINUED TO BE UNDER A DICTATORSHIP IN RODRIGUES."

4. COMMENT: DUVAL'S DISTINCTION WAS A RATHER FINE ONE. HIS PAPER, LE POPULAIRE, TRIED TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM THE IMMEDIATE ISSUE BY REMINDING ITS READERS OF RAMGOOLAM'S PRE-INDEPENDENCE "SALE" OF DIEGO GARCIA, ANOTHER OF MAURITIUS' FORMER ISLAND DEPENDENCIES, TO THE BRITISH. THE REST OF THE PRESS HAS REFERRED TO DUVAL'S "MAYOTTIZATION" OF RODRIGUES.

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